

# National Counter Terrorism Centre



**NCTC Newsletter - Volume 39: June 2020**

## Maldives Begins to Build a More Resilient Community when Emerging from the COVID-19 Crisis



Source: [presidency.gov.mv](https://presidency.gov.mv)

President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih reiterates in his remarks during the inauguration of the National Taskforce on Resilience Building and Economic Recovery on 17 June 2020, that “the fundamental purpose of constituting this Taskforce is to help the Maldives emerge from the COVID-19 crisis a more resilient country”. Furthermore, he highlighted the strides the Maldives has made in a short while, in terms of increasing its healthcare capacity and resources to combat the virus, and welcomed how

quickly the country has been able to reach a stage in which it can safely consider reopening borders.

President Solih added that combatting COVID-19 and rebuilding a more resilient Maldives is a collective national effort, and encouraged the taskforce to continue to work alongside all branches of the government, as well as with state institutions, the private sector, and civil society, in order to finally put the pandemic behind us.



## Community Resilience for Peace and Security when Emerging from the COVID-19 Crisis

Alongside the steps taken by the Government to accelerate the country's economic recovery from COVID-19, National Security also have to be addressed to make the community resilient to the threats of violent extremism growing in the country. For that national efforts are underway with collaboration with international and local partners of peacebuilding using the whole of government and whole of society approach.

For that National Counter Terrorism Centre along with its stakeholders are continuing its efforts in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. During the course of the month of June 2020, NCTC have continued dialogues with UN and its bodies to identify the ways forward in assistance and capacity building of the Maldivian community to fight violent extremism and terrorism.

One of the important ...continued on page 3

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programmes are underway in collaboration with the UNODC. The development of a regional network to prevent violent extremism (PVE) for South Asia, which was initially proposed in July 2018 in Malaysia at a cross-regional event on “Strengthening national and regional legal frameworks and networks for preventing and countering violent extremism leading to terrorism”.



After a series of consultations amongst the Maldivian stakeholders, in May 2020 UNODC organized an online consultation meeting to discuss practical aspects of development and operation of a regional network, based on the experience and good practices of existing regional PVE networks, including the European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network (EU RAN), but considering the particular needs and challenges of South Asian countries. As a result of the meeting, the drafting of a roadmap for the establishment of a regional network for South Asia was recommended.

Following this UNODC has developed its draft roadmap to provide technical assistance to Member States on establishing and developing a South Asian Network on Prevention of Violent Extremism that considers regional needs and particularities. An online meeting is scheduled to be conducted amongst the regional stakeholders

beginning of July 2020.

Another area of discussions were held in 3rd June 2020 with UNODC and the Juvenile Justice Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs. During the online meeting for the Virtual Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA) by UNODC, it was deliberated upon the institutional framework and practices for dealing with the phenomenon of child involvement in crimes, the child justice system and the area of rehabilitation and reintegration of children deprived of liberty.

UNDP Maldives is also continuing its collaborative efforts with NCTC in formulating the upcoming programmes in PCVE for the Maldivian community. On 16 June 2020, Ms Akiko Fujii, Resident Representative of UNDP Maldives and her team made an online call to Brigadier General Zakariyya Mansoor, Director General of NCTC with senior officers and deliberated on future areas of collaborations in the PCVE efforts in the Maldives.

Hence, to enhance community resilience there needs to be a unity of effort involved at all levels and all stakeholders nation wide. A whole of nation approach to all efforts in peace and security needs to be established and placed in to action. Beginning from the child's learning environment, resilience could be included in the every day life including parents.



Every crisis brings opportunities. While we continue to understand and mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19, we must also seize the opportunity provided by the pandemic to review, adapt and strengthen our counter-terrorism work.

**VLADIMIR VORONKOV**  
Under-Secretary-General  
UN Office of Counter-Terrorism



@UN\_OCT

# Civil Society Organizations and their role on PVE in Maldives

*By: Ahmed Irash*

Maldives, reminds us of sun, and white sandy beaches, and as we say now, the sun will shine again. As the flight descends to land on the run way of Velana International Airport we see the beauty of Maldives and the welcoming smiles of the Maldivians for their visitors their guests to our country. But; how many of us know that the airport development project was one of the major community-led projects under taken in the Maldives. It is evident in the history books that there were corals and sand bought by volunteers all the way from the North and South of the Maldives, turning the possibility into the reality that we see today.

Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) registered and non-registered has contributed immensely to the development of community. They have helped their wards, islands and atolls achieve their dreams. The president of Maldives His Excellency Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said "Civil Society Organizations are the 5th pillar of our system". Empowering Civil Societies in the key decision making and providing opportunities to them has been a top priority of the government.

The world is facing an unprecedented catastrophe of recent times that has hit us all and completely changing way of life and shutting the world down. In Maldives there has been over 2000 confirmed cases. Government took swift measures from January 2020 to prepare for this pandemic. Along with the National Emergency Operation Centre and on their individual capacity the works done by CSO's during this unprecedented time has been commendable.

With over 3000 Registered CSO's Maldives is one of the most exotic yet vulnerable country. However violent extremism and terrorism in today's world are complex and its challenges are not limited. Terrorist groups and violent extremist movements are less cohesive, and the threat is harder to understand and

predict. Even during this covid crisis we see various organized crimes that has been carried by different groups and that at different parts of Maldives.

Under the leadership of Honorable Minister of Defense Uza. Mariyam Ahmed Didi and the NCTC Team there has been lot of new initiatives that are taking place. More inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes in developing PVE activities have been put in place and we are yet to see more active contribution



by the CSO. This is fairly a new approach to actively involve CSO's in this process globally as well and especially with PVE being a very sensitive area. But as we are revisiting the new normal and practices this is more relevant more than ever as it is time to formulate programmes and strategies to overcome the effects of Covid19 and its impact.

We see a lot of collective effort which would really pave the way to counter violent extremism and radicalization.

## **Acknowledgement**

*Mr. Ahmed Irash works in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment as the Political Head of Youth Department. As a permanent member of the Counter Radicalisation Committee of NCTC, his insight in promoting peace and security gives a great contribution in strategic communications for PCVE efforts by the government of Maldives.*

# An Overview from the U.S. Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Maldives

24<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## Introduction

The State Department of the United States of America deployed technical experts to the Maldives, and many countries around the globe to help develop effective protocols and programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTF family members. During these efforts they have formulated the Country Report on Terrorism 2019, a continued effort by the State Department annually.

In this report it is asserted that in Maldives, the Solih administration continues to make progress bolstering its CT efforts. In July, President Solih announced Maldives' intent to facilitate the return and prosecution of Maldivian FTFs and families in Syria. The Maldivian government also passed an amendment strengthening its 2015 Anti-Terrorism Act and designated 17 terrorist organizations in September. In October, Maldivian police arrested Specially Designated Global Terrorist and ISIS recruiter Mohamad Ameen on "suspicion of spreading extremist ideology."

Furthermore, the report highlighted that rehabilitation and reintegration of former terrorists as well as ISIS-associated family members has become a pressing concern for the global community. The CT Bureau coordinated global engagement on the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs and ISIS-associated families repatriated from Syria and Iraq. The CT Bureau supported the travel of U.S. and international subject matter experts to Maldives, including other countries.

## Maldives

*"Overview:* In 2019, the Government of Maldives's CT efforts concentrated on CVE and limiting the flow of FTFs. Those within the penal system or involved in criminal gangs are at a heightened risk of terrorist

radicalization. The government claims that 188 cases related to "religious extremism" were reported between January 1, 2014, and October 31, 2019. Of these, 14 were brought forward for prosecution."

"In October, Maldivian police arrested ISIS-K recruiter Mohamad Ameen on "suspicion of spreading extremist ideology." Ameen recruited for ISIS in Syria, Afghanistan, and Maldives. Media reports also alleged that Ameen was suspected of involvement in the September 2007 Sultan Park bombing in Malé."

"In October, Maldives passed an amendment strengthening its 2015 Anti-Terrorism Act. The amendment clarified the definition of terrorism, expanded the number of chargeable offenses related to terrorism, and introduced a monitoring mechanism to prevent politically motivated prosecutions."

"2019 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Maldives in 2019."

"Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Anti-Terrorism Act is the primary legislation for preventing and prosecuting terrorism. In October, the government passed an amendment strengthening the ATA. This amendment authorizes the Maldives Police Service (MPS) to make warrantless arrests for criminal acts defined as terrorism; criminalizes supporting "extremist" ideologies, departing for a war zone without government authorization, assisting individuals attempting to join militant groups, and withholding information regarding terrorism from authorities; and introduces longer prison sentences for terrorism. The amendment requires the establishment of a rehabilitation and reintegration center for returning Maldivian FTFs, including a separate space for women and children deemed victims who did not commit acts of terrorism. The law also creates a new CT risk assessment committee to assess ...continued on page 6



whether repatriated individuals engaged in acts of terrorism or might be inclined to do so in the future. Parliament was given oversight authority through a monitoring mechanism in the amendment to prevent politically motivated prosecutions such as those that occurred in 2018 and previously.”

“In September, the government designated 17 terrorist organizations under the ATA, criminalizing participation in, or support to, such organizations.”

“In September, the Presidential Commission on Deaths and Enforced Disappearances released its findings regarding the 2014 disappearance of Maldivian journalist Ahmed Rilwan, concluding he was abducted and killed by a Maldivian terrorist group linked to al-Qa’ida. The commission asked the Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO) to appeal the acquittal of two suspects accused of involvement in the killing and determine whether there is sufficient evidence to prosecute additional individuals suspected of involvement.”

“In November 2018, the Criminal Court ordered the conditional release of two Maldivians charged in November 2017 with conspiring with ISIS to launch a suicide attack in Malé, based on their treatment during detention. The Maldivian High Court reversed this decision in April and ordered the two individuals detained for the duration of their trials.”

“The MPS is responsible for CT investigations. It transfers cases to the PGO for the duration of trials. Responsibility for CT operations, including investigations, primarily rests with MPS. The Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF), including the marines and coast guard, are responsible for CT response. The MNDF conducts routine Subject Matter Expert Exchanges and Joint Combined Exercise and Training engagements with U.S. forces focused on CT operations. The engagements also enhance maritime security capabilities to increase Maldives domain awareness and security. Maldives and the United States partnered in 2019 to upgrade the U.S.-provided PISCES integrated border management system. Information sharing on potential security threats between Maldivian security agencies has improved but remains a challenge.”

“Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Maldives is a member of the APG. There were no significant updates in 2019.”

“Countering Violent Extremism: In July, President Solih announced Maldives’ intent to facilitate the return and prosecution of Maldivian FTFs and families in Syria. According to MPS Commissioner Hameed’s December 16 public remarks, there are approximately 1,400 “religious extremists” located in the Maldives. The Maldives’ National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) held numerous regional workshops and capacity building exercises with both public and private sector groups, to include counter-narrative creation, the role of educators in countering “extremism,” and aviation security. In October, President Solih announced a five-year CVE strategic action plan, designating the NCTC as the national coordination body for these efforts. Malé is a member of the SCN.”

“International and Regional Cooperation: Government officials participated in and jointly hosted multiple international and regional workshops on CT efforts. In February 2019, a joint report was issued by the NCTC, UNDP, and Government of Japan on youth vulnerability in the Maldives. This report highlighted concerns over the increasing use of religion as a political weapon and the increasing influence of Salafism. It also highlighted concern about the number of foreign preachers present in the Maldives and their role in recruitment for terrorist organizations. In October, CTED conducted a visit to examine issues relating to CVE. The NCTC, in conjunction with CTED, hosted a three-day regional workshop on obtaining electronic evidence in CT investigations. Additionally, in October, the government concluded an agreement with the Government of Japan for \$4.6 million in Japanese aid to bolster CT efforts.”

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“Country Reports on Terrorism 2019 - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, June 24, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/>.

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